

To whom it may concern,

My name is Julieta Ulaje and I am a senior at Reynolds High School. Like many others, high school was a giant change. My freshman and sophomore I made a lot of mistakes. I was lost in a world full of questions. Although my family problems should not have been an excuse for my childish way of acting, sadly it is what drove me to make some unhealthy decisions. My family and I were going through a very rough path. When I was in the middle of 4<sup>th</sup> grade my mother, my younger sister, and myself moved in with my stepfather. We had discovered what sadness felt like. It was not all his fault because in order to have marriage problems you need two partners. A year after we had been together the problems increased. I was a very well student throughout my elementary. There were times where my sister and I stayed up all night wondering why we had to move away from our home. I used to be happy when I went to school because I loved learning and keeping my brain active but that changed. I only liked school because I could get away from my house. You see, back then we lived with my grandparents and we were the happiest children. My mom worked hard to maintain us happy and with good living conditions. We were not aware our father was not in our lives because we received all the love from our family. It fulfilled our needs. I started babysitting my sisters and brother when I was 10 years old. I started feeling like I could no longer be a child. I had to grow up and take care of my family. I had to take care of 3 lives while my parents worked. Just in 2 years we moved 6 times. From apartment to apartment. From family member to family member. Throughout middle school I still tried to focus on education although my mind was always somewhere else. Nobody knew I was going through problems because I never opened up to a single soul. Throughout middle school my mom separated from my stepdad about 4 times but we always came back to him because now she had 4 kids to take care of. She had no job and nothing to support us with. I tried staying strong for my mom and sister. I did not want to cause more pain to my mom by making bad decisions, so I worked hard on school and tried making her proud. I did not know that would change in the most important years of my life. My high school years. We were still experiencing those sleepless nights and going to school the next day with dark circles under my eyes. I was used to it by now. I hung out with the wrong crowd. It was not their fault for my mistakes but they did make it easier for me to commit bad decisions. I was introduced to many things. My body was in school but my mind was wondering around. Always thinking if my family would someday be completely happy. I remember teachers asking me questions but I was spaced out most of the time. I was drowning in my own thoughts trying to make sense of an unfair world. Those two first years of high school we almost moved to Vancouver about 3 times. We lived with my aunt for about a week. I really thought it was for good that time but I was wrong. We moved back with my step dad. Both of my parents always talked to me about doing good in school and taking my education seriously because they wanted to see me be successful. What they didn't know is the damage that their decisions were causing not only me but my sister as well. Even though my parents have problems between them they try to not get us involved and keep our family at peace. I failed classes those two first years and I regret it very much because now I finally understand. To this day I still babysit and my family still goes through many struggles but I know that by making bad decisions, it won't make it any better. I now understand all that my mother gave up for my sister and I to have a better life. She believed that by moving to the USA we would have better and many opportunities. She was right. I will not let those opportunities go to waste. I turned my life around my junior year. I passed all my classes and ended with

a 3.1 GPA my last semester. I have taken credit recovery and I will keep on doing whatever I need to do to graduate with my class. I plan on working twice as hard every day. Dancing has always been a getaway thing when I felt upset or even when I felt happy. I believe dancing is a stress reliever. That is why I would like to take the opportunity to be able to be in the Reynolds Dance Team. Thank you for your time.